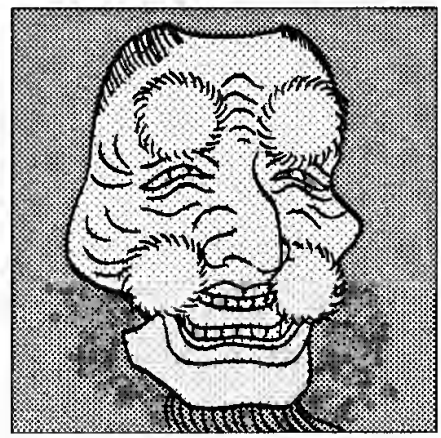
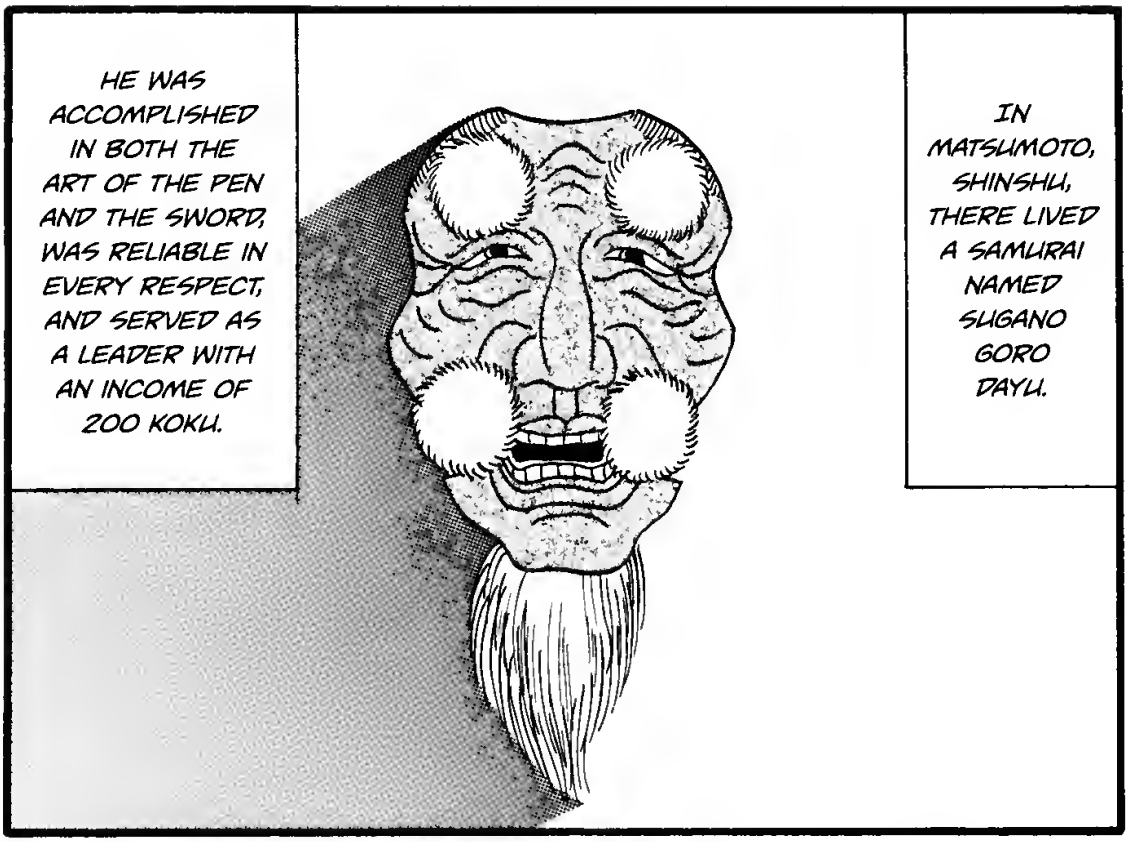
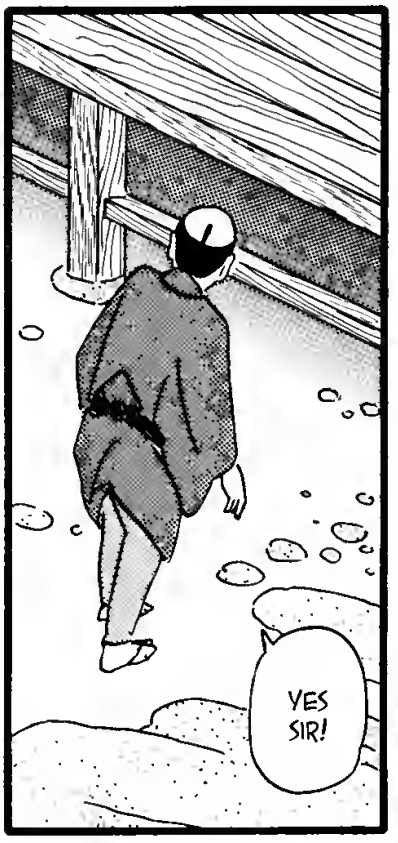
Tale 27

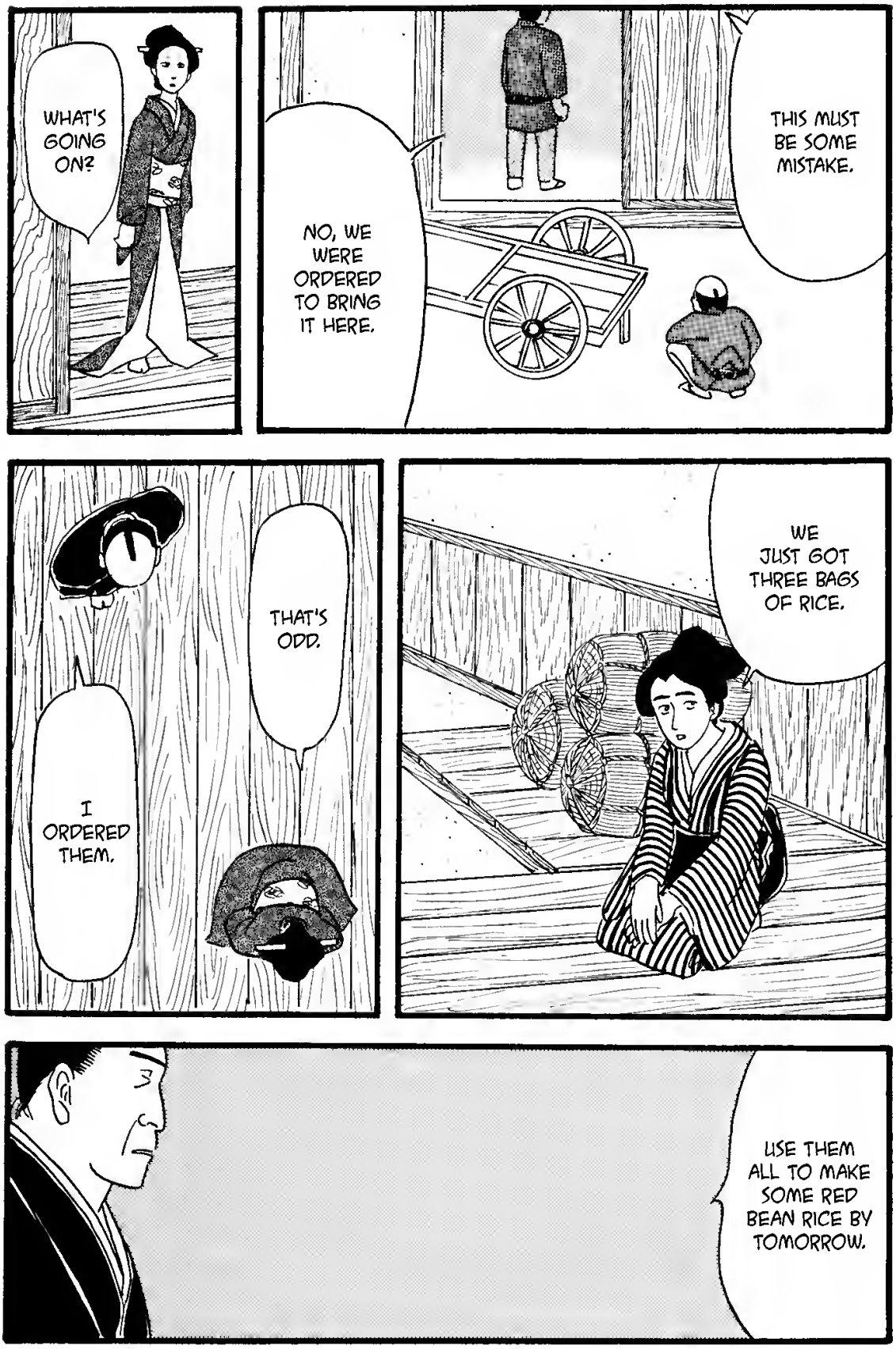
Becoming a Tengu

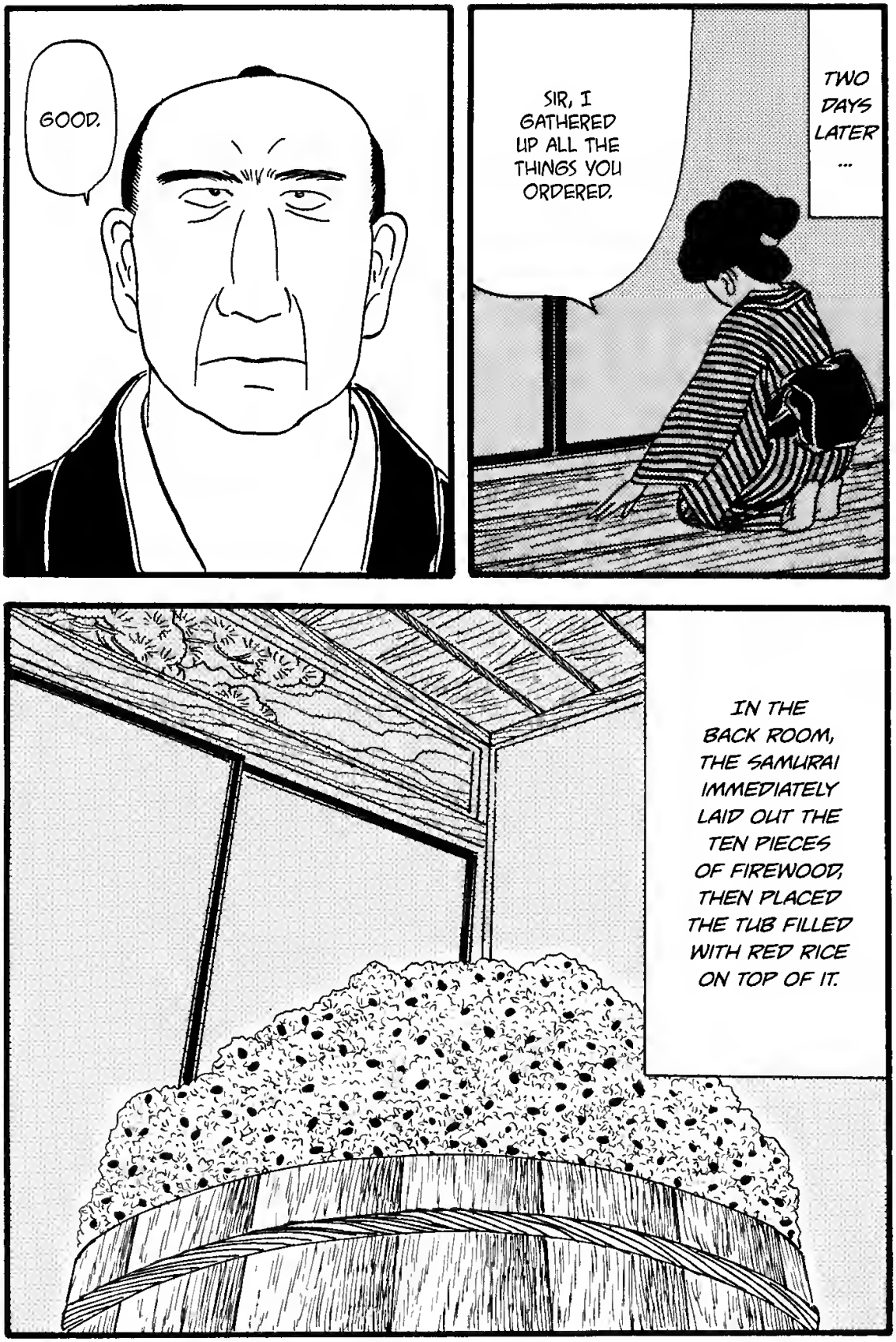


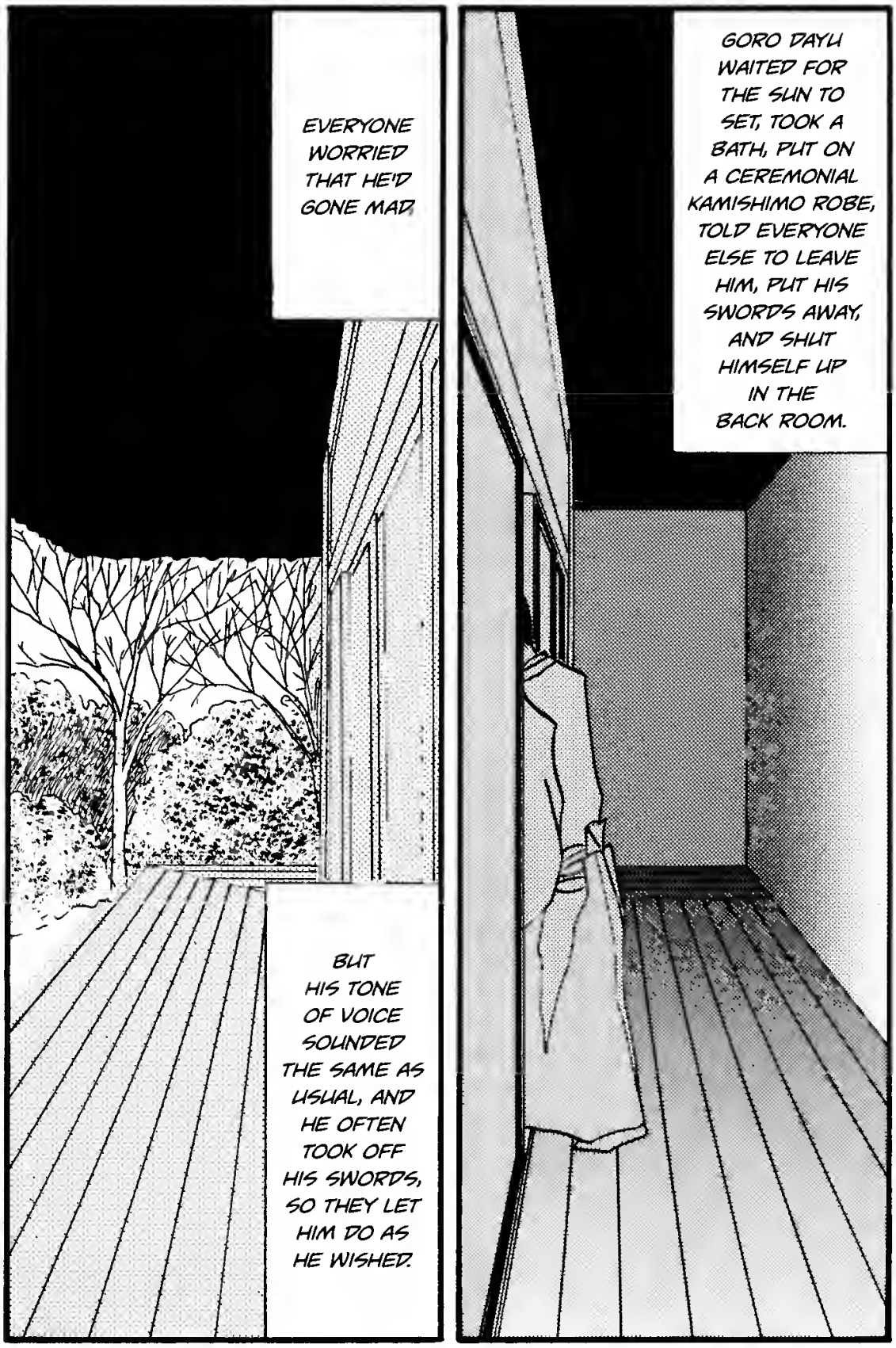

IN MATSUMOTO, SHINSHU, THERE LIVED A SAMURAI NAMED SUGANO GORO DAYU.
HE WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN BOTH THE ART OF THE PEN AND THE SWORD, WAS RELIABLE IN EVERY RESPECT, AND SERVED AS A LEADER WITH AN INCOME OF 200 KOKU.

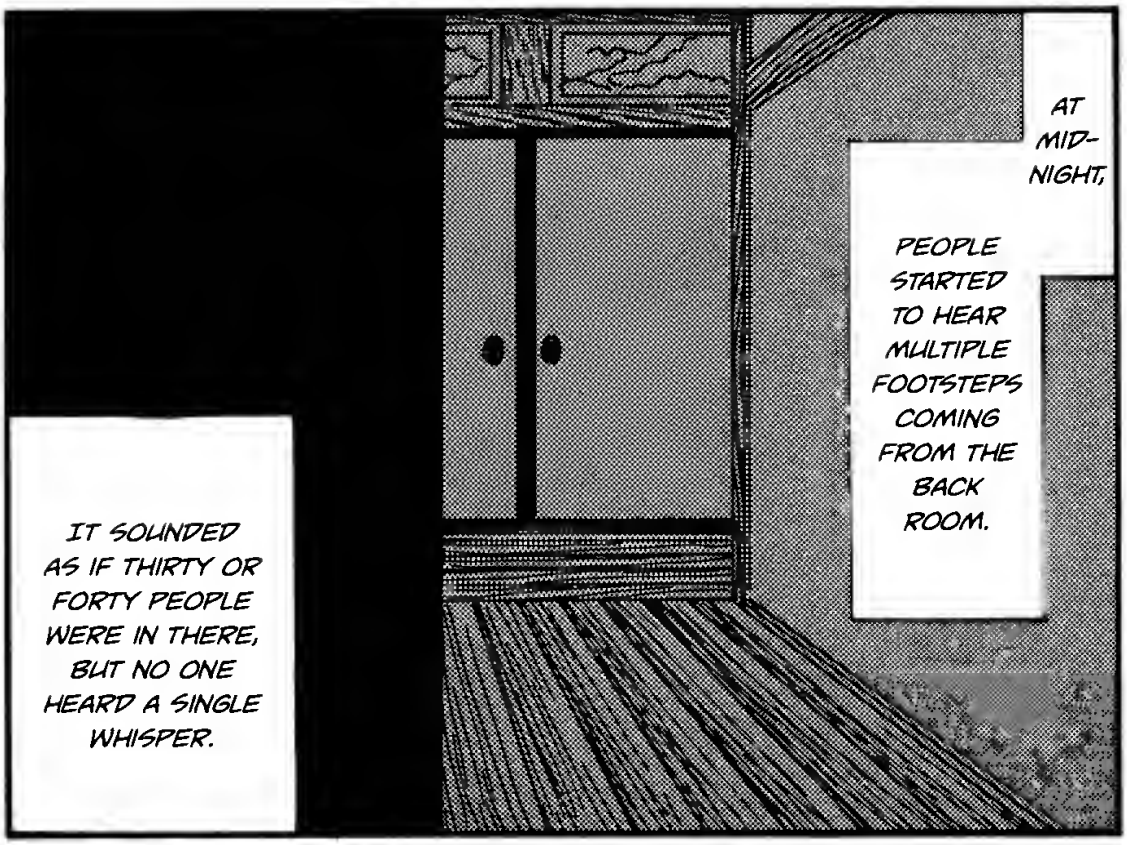

YES SIR!

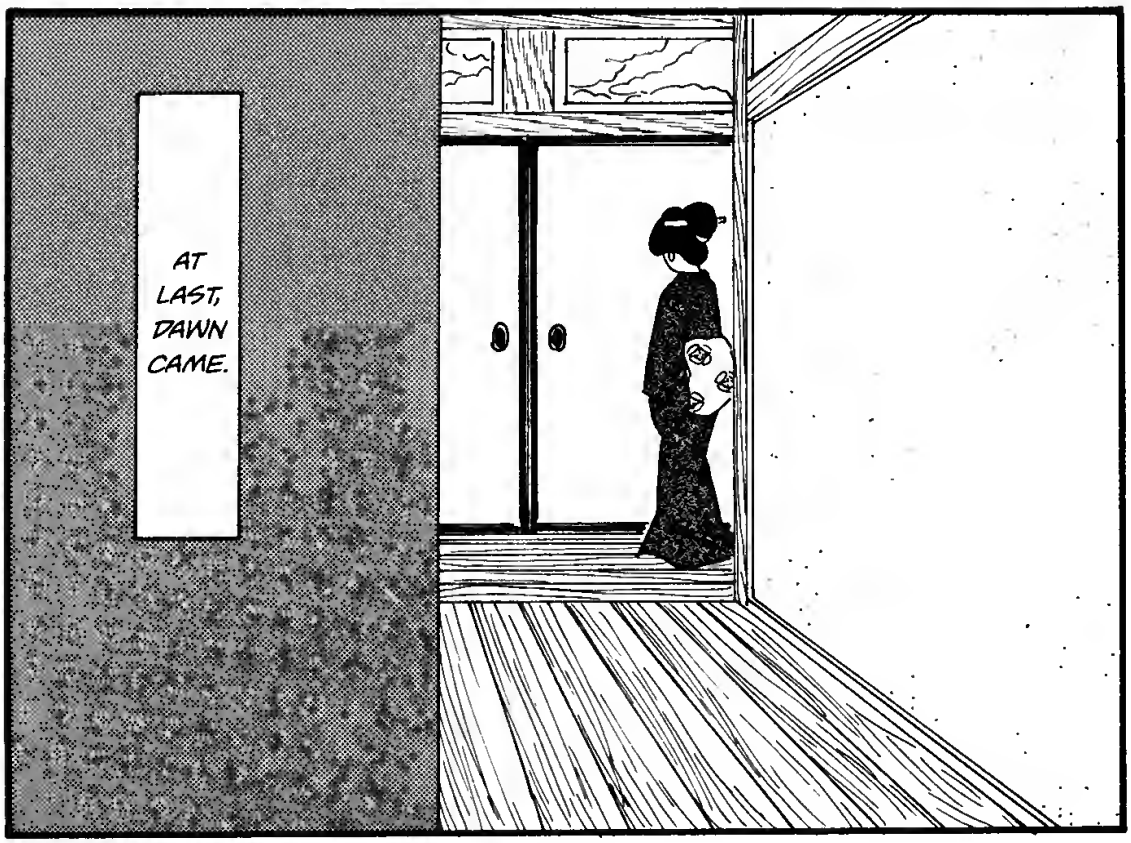
ONE NEW YEAR'S EVE...
MOSUKE, BRING ME A 1.8 METER TUB AND TEN NEW PIECES OF FIREWOOD BY TOMORROW.


WHAT'S GOING ON?
NO, WE WERE ORDERED TO BRING IT HERE.
THIS MUST BE SOME MISTAKE.
THAT'S ODD.
I ORDERED THEM.
WE JUST GOT THREE BAGS OF RICE.
USE THEM ALL TO MAKE SOME RED BEAN RICE BY TOMORROW.

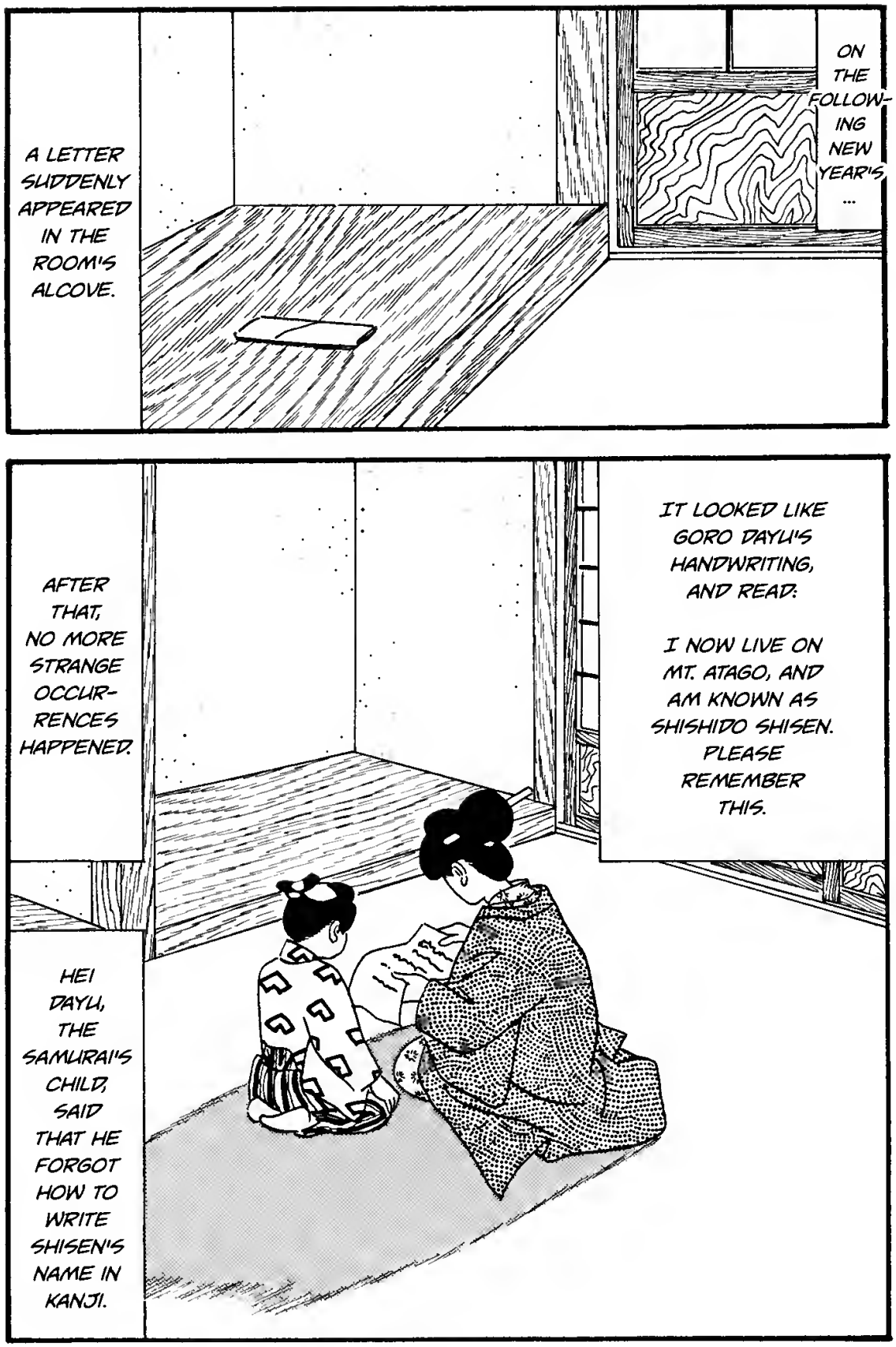

GOOD.
SIR, I GATHERED UP ALL THE THINGS YOU ORDERED.
TWO DAYS LATER ...
IN THE BACK ROOM, THE SAMURAI IMMEDIATELY LAID OUT THE TEN PIECES OF FIREWOOD, THEN PLACED THE TUB FILLED WITH RED RICE ON TOP OF IT.


GORO DAYU WAITED FOR THE SUN TO SET, TOOK A BATH, PUT ON A CEREMONIAL KAMISHIMO ROBE, TOLD EVERYONE ELSE TO LEAVE HIM, PUT HIS SWORDS AWAY, AND SHUT HIMSELF UP IN THE BACK ROOM.
EVERYONE WORRIED THAT HE'D GONE MAD.
BUT HIS TONE OF VOICE SOUNDED THE SAME AS USUAL, AND HE OFTEN TOOK OFF HIS SWORDS, SO THEY LET HIM DO AS HE WISHED.


AT MID-NIGHT,
PEOPLE STARTED TO HEAR MULTIPLE FOOTSTEPS COMING FROM THE BACK ROOM.
IT SOUNDED AS IF THIRTY OR FORTY PEOPLE WERE IN THERE, BUT NO ONE HEARD A SINGLE WHISPER.


AT LAST, DAWN CAME.

WHEN A SERVANT SLID THE DOOR TO THE BACK ROOM OPEN JUST A TAD AND PEERED INSIDE, SHE SAW THAT THE TUB WAS EMPTY.
SHE SEARCHED THE ENTIRE ROOM, BUT GORO DAYU WAS NO-WHERE TO BE FOUND.


A LETTER SUDDENLY APPEARED IN THE ROOM'S ALCOVE.
ON THE FOLLOW-ING NEW YEAR'S, ...
AFTER THAT, NO MORE STRANGE OCCUR-RENCES HAPPENED.
IT LOOKED LIKE GORO DAYU'S HANDWRITING, AND READ:
I NOW LIVE ON MT. ATAGO, AND AM KNOWN AS SHISHIDO SHISEN. PLEASE REMEMBER THIS.
HEI DAYU, THE SAMURAI'S CHILD, SAID THAT HE FORGOT HOW TO WRITE SHISEN'S NAME IN KANJI.